

JOCHELSON, THE KORYAK.

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I was told that the marriage of a nephew with his uncle's wife, or that of a widower with the elder sister of his deceased wife, is countenanced. It is possible that these deviations should be ascribed to the decline in the force of traditions, under the influence of the Russians, or, better still, of the Russianized Koryak of northern Kamchatka.

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In the village Itkana a Koryak (Eigexmit by name) who was married to two cousins was pointed out to me; while among the Reindeer Koryak of the Taigonos Peninsula, I knew an elderly Koryak (Xot'tto by name) who had married the widow of his deceased younger cousin. The old people told Xot'tto that he should not do it, that it was a sin; but he would not listen to them. These cases, too, may perhaps be ascribed to the weakening of the taboo.

COURTING AND SERVING FOR A BRIDE. — The custom of having the parents or other elder relatives of a young man go to the bride's parents as match-makers for him, was evidently practised in antiquity too. In the myths we meet with this custom.¹ The match-maker is called *pañnočetala'n* (i. e., "the asking one"), since the essence of match-making consists in the bridegroom's father, mother, or other elder kinsman, asking permission for the bridegroom to serve for the girl. The customary formula of match-making is as follows: On entering the house, the match-maker says, "Here I've come." — "What for?" the girl's father asks. "I am looking for a wife," the match-maker replies. "For whom?" the match-maker is asked. "For so and so," he answers. "Well," says the father, after meditating a while, "we have girls, but they are bad; later on you may yet scold us." — "No, it is all right," the match-maker will say. "Then let him come, I will not harm him," the host will return.

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It is curious to note the modesty with which the father speaks of the bride, not only without attempting to praise her, but even speaking disparagingly of her qualities. In this is partly expressed the desire of the bride's father to disclaim all responsibility for misunderstandings that may arise in the future between the young couple.

Very often the young people get along without match-makers. This is the case particularly when parents disapprove of a son's choice, and if he does not want to submit to their disapproval. Frequently a young man does not tell anybody of his intentions. He goes to the house in which the girl lives whom he desires to marry, and, without saying a word, remains there, performing all house-work becoming to a man. The house-owner receives the suitor's services with the same silence as he renders them. If the bridegroom pleases him, the bride's father begins to intrust him with commissions. The Reindeer Koryak send the bridegroom to take care of the herd; and, in general, the future father-in-law tries to tire him out, and is over-exacting.

If the bride's parents do not want the bridegroom, they suggest that he

¹ See Part I p. 261.

584 leave their house. In such cases the Reindeer people catch the reindeer on which the undesirable suitor had come, harness the sledge, carry his belongings out, and place him on the sledge, saying simply, "Depart!" In such cases it happens that the young man goes off a short distance, and, coming back, stops at the tent, and patiently and silently sits on his hitched-up sledge without unharnessing his reindeer, which he starves until he is called back into the tent. By such stubbornness persistent suitors have often obtained the consent of the bride's parents.

583 The term of the bridegroom's service varies from six months to three years. In Kamenskoye, for instance, the bridegroom is kept for a long time before the bride is given to him. This depends on the pleasure of the bride's father or elder brother. Often the mother says to the father, or in his absence to the elder son, that the young man has been tortured long enough.

What is the character of the Koryak custom of serving for a bride? By ethnologists a bridegroom's service is generally considered as payment for the bride; i. e., as a reward to the bride's father for his loss of a working-woman. In the present case this explanation seems inapplicable. Among the Reindeer Koryak, the wealthy reindeer-breeders would prefer to pay with reindeer, were service a payment for the bride; but this does not occur. Besides, the son-in-law, along with his wife, receives her reindeer, the value of which is not in any way equalled by the value of the bridegroom's services. As we shall see later on, in those cases in which the son-in-law remains in his father-in-law's house, he must still pass through a certain preliminary term of service as a bridegroom. This service can in no wise be considered payment for the bride, as her father not only does not lose a worker when she marries, but even acquires an additional one in his son-in-law. Finally, if the suit is pressed by an elderly or wealthy man, the service is reduced to a minimum, and is performed in a formal manner only. In my opinion, the service for a bride among the Koryak is of the nature of a test of the bridegroom. A serving bridegroom is not an ordinary workman. The principal thought is not his usefulness, but the hard and humiliating trials to which he is subjected. The bridegroom is given a poor bed, he is ill-fed, he is not allowed to sleep late, he is sent on exhausting errands. As a herdsman he must pass his nights without sleep, while the proprietor of the herd and the bride's brothers are resting. In a word, during his term of service, his endurance, patience, and meekness, his adroitness as a hunter, and his zeal and frugality as a herdsman, are tested. The bride's father gives his assent to the marriage only after the bridegroom has stood the probation well.

This view of the trial of a bridegroom, who must perform tests dangerous to his life, and win contests, is also found in Koryak tales.¹

¹ See Part I, pp. 163, 198, 250.

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In antiquity, as the Koryak relate, the match-maker, too, had to do all manner of house-work during the bridegroom's sojourn in the house of the bride's parents. This evidently was considered a test of the bridegroom's relatives. The custom of having the match-maker perform the duties of a servant in the house of the bride's parents is still widespread among many Chukchee.¹

A very characteristic story of match-making among the Indighirka Chukchee was related to me by a Reindeer Yukaghir who sued for the hand of a Chukchee girl in behalf of his brother. His brother had fallen in love with a Chukchee girl; but her father, a wealthy reindeer-breeder, did not want the bridegroom, not because the latter was a poor Yukaghir, but because he thought him a bad herdsman. Then the girl herself went to the Yukaghir family, and engaged there in household duties with the other women. By virtue of the custom of hospitality, she was not asked what she had come for. Thus three days had passed. The kinsman of the Yukaghir would have had no objection to this marriage, if they had not feared, that, owing to the girl's wilful leaving of her parental home, her father would refuse to give up her share of reindeer. On the third day the young man's elder brother said to the Chukchee girl, "We do not act the way you do. Go with me to your father's house, and I shall press the suit for your hand." The Chukchee girl went with him in silence. On the way he broke a quantity of dry twigs, placed them by the hearth, took the buckets, fetched water, and did other household work. "In vain do you, old man, do that which women can do," said the Chukchee host to the Yukaghir. — "I have come to press suit for your daughter's hand," the Yukaghir replied. "Why should you sue for it? She ran away to your house of her own accord," the Chukchee said, railing at the Yukaghir. After that the Yukaghir stubbornly persisted in doing all tasks about the house, and the Chukchee spoke to him no more. A few days later the Chukchee somehow said aloud to his house-fellows, as is their habit, "I am going out to stool." The Yukaghir went out after him; and, while the Chukchee was satisfying nature's demands, the Yukaghir tore up a quantity of soft grass and handed it to him. This humiliation at last touched the Chukchee. He put the bundle of grass to use. Then he entered the house and told the Yukaghir that he might send his brother to serve for his daughter.

MARRIAGE. — When the bride's father has decided that it is time to end the probation service, he tells the bridegroom that he may seize the bride; i. e., marry her. There are no marriage rites or festivities whatever. Marriage proper is performed by the first cohabitation; but even prior to this, the marriage becomes legalized by means of a symbolic action. The

¹ See Jochelson, *Wandering Tribes*, p. 25.

"The young Korak's troubles begin when he first falls in love; this, like Achilles' wrath, is 'the direful spring of woes unnumbered.' If his intentions are serious, he calls upon the damsel's father and makes formal proposals for her hand, [197] ascertains the amount of her dower in reindeer, and learns her estimated value. He is probably told that he must work for his wife two or three years--a rather severe trial of any young man's affection. He then seeks an interview with the young lady herself, and performs the agreeable or disagreeable duty which corresponds in Korak to the civilized custom of 'popping the question.' We had hoped to get some valuable hints from the Koraks as to the best method which their experience suggested for the successful accomplishment of this delicate task; but we could learn nothing which would be applicable to the more artificial relations of civilized society. If the young man's sentiments are reciprocated, and he obtains a positive promise of marriage, he goes cheerfully to work, like Ferdinand in 'The Tempest' for Miranda's father, and spends two or three years in cutting and drawing wood, watching reindeer, making sledges, and contributing generally to the interests of his prospective father-in-law. At the end of this probationary period comes the grand 'experimentum crucis,' which is to decide his fate and prove the success of the uselessness of his long labor."